

Detective work with a deficient sample:

Syntactic analysis of the houses of conflict

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Ciler Kirsan

University College London, UK, and Gebze Institute of Technology, Turkey

Abstract

Space Syntax theory and tools have been utilised to conduct a cross-ethnic comparison in the vernacular domestic space in Cyprus, during a period, which covers the spatial coexistence of ethnic groups namely Greek and Turkish Cypriots, from their cohabitation to their confrontation (1900's – 1974). The study specifically explores the nature and evolution of the inter-ethnic differences, together with town-village variations, across Greek and Turkish Cypriot houses in terms of their underlying spatial genotypes. Limitation of the study area to one part of the divided Island which has been settled only by one of the groups since 1974 and the need to gather data on both Turkish and Greek houses for a period prior to this date have been the major constraints in the study. On the other hand, most of the investigated houses have been either subjected to ethnic cross-occupation due to the migration of original users or to spatial and functional changes and deterioration over time. All these constraints have resulted in a body of data incomplete in nature which, compared to the norm where occupation and spatial form go together, was necessarily "deficient". In order to overcome the special problems posed by the "deficient" sample and to be able to piece together the story from a series of clues present in the incomplete data, certain analytical strategies have been developed and a series of analyses have been conducted.

Space Syntax convex analysis methods have been applied consistently to a sample of 210 house layouts of Greek and Turkish origins. The initial results of this ongoing comprehensive study suggest that the two dominant themes across sample, namely "courtyard" and "central space-integrated", do not correspond to ethnicity but rather to "village" and "town" houses respectively which are referred here as "rural" and "urban" types. In time, the social consequences of rapid and substantial socio-economic changes as a result of modernisation, seem to govern the rules for the development of "rural house" into an "urban" or a "semi-urban" one for both ethnic groups.

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Keywords

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c.kirsan@ucl.ac.uk

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